



LC STUDY GUIDE

Global Awareness Week: "Neighboring Well"

The Passage: Mark 12:28-33

November 14-28

Intro: We've just wrapped up a wonderful Global Awareness Week with missions partners visiting from around the world. At the same time, we are recovering from an intense week of the results of the Presidential election. Both of these events highlight the need for Christ-followers and the church to "neighbor well." What does that look like in practice?

Today we'll look at a short set of verses in which the teachers of the law challenge Jesus' understanding of God's law. The religious leaders trying to trap Jesus was a common scene in the Gospels. In this moment, it seems there is some entrapment (in the preceding part of Chapter 12) as well as some sincerity.

Our contemporary world feels similar in some regards: Some try to dismiss Jesus and the Church's witness, while some sincerely try to understand. In today's passage, Jesus gives us not only the starting point, but also the ultimate framework to live out of.

Today's central idea: Jesus' understanding of God's law is rooted in love and it extends to every aspect of our life, including how we treat "the other."

Mark 12:28-33

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

³² "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

O – Read this familiar passage over silently to yourself. What words or phrases seem to jump out to you? What do you find interesting? Is there anything you find peculiar?

I – Rabbinic teaching held that there were 613 commandments of God's law; 248 were positive, and 365 were considered prohibitions (some were considered to be "lighter")

and others “weightier”). So when the teacher of the law approaches Jesus, what do you think he is testing Jesus for?

(The teacher of the law is testing Jesus’ most fundamental understanding of God’s law. Is Jesus a legit rabbi? As we read in v. 29, Jesus gives an orthodox reply straight from the daily confession of Israel called the “Shema” [which means “to hear”; Deut. 6:4-9].)

I – Jesus’ answer reveals that God’s law is rooted in loving God with one’s entire being: heart, soul, mind, and strength. The Jewish idea of “strength” does not merely describe one’s physical energy and stamina but also their financial resources, including their authority, influence, and power. How does this shape your understanding of Jesus’ command?

(In effect, Jesus is saying, “love God with all of who you are and with anything you can control or leverage.” This is part of a holistic understanding of life.)

I – There’s a key second part to Jesus’ answer. The provocative part is that Jesus doesn’t just leave it with the “Shema.” He also adds the need to love our neighbor. In fact, he makes this piece an extension to the first part of his answer. What do you think Jesus is saying here?

(Jesus is saying that a key part of our inner commitment to love God is expressed in all of our conduct and relationships. If we do not love our neighbors, we cannot claim to fully love God either, as God is a being of love for others. For more, see I John 4:7-16.)

A – How does Jesus’ ethic of love confront religious exclusivism and our Western individualism?

A – Without overthinking it, how does loving God with our entire being and loving others as we do ourselves radically re-order our lives? What implications does this have in our personal daily worship? In our inter-personal relationships amongst our inner circle, friends, acquaintances, strangers, and rivals? What happens when we love God with our entire being in community and as a community on mission?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.